



True to His Craft

Julien DeFrance reveals that the French do not make good vodkas

WORDS LUANN ALPHONSO

PROFILE

Hometown: Paris
Age: 32

Occupation:
Brand Ambassador for Grand Marnier
Favourite Drink:
Anything that he can make with Grand Marnier

DeFrance, ambassador for Grand Marnier, claims that growing up in Rome has the Frenchman in him slightly confused. "Sometimes I wake up, I feel French, sometimes when I go to sleep, I feel Italian." Fortunately, that confusion poses no impact on the excellent cocktails he plies. Five years ago, this seasoned mixologist founded Likidostyle, a drink consulting firm with numerous clients in Europe and a branch in Hong Kong. His favourite ingredients to work with include fresh coffee, fruit and French liqueurs.

So what is your impression of the Asian cocktail culture?

The cocktail culture is catching on really fast – but only with certain

things. Unfortunately, they keep using really cheap liquors and spirits. They do know a lot about cocktails and mixology, but when we talk cocktails, we talk about ingredients.

Where do you think the lack of emphasis on the quality of ingredients comes from?

Indeed, we should take care of costs when mixing cocktails, but we cannot forget that the first goal of a good bartender is to satisfy guests and have people enjoy the drinks. So the most important thing is to make people happy. And I think if you work for a

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few years, you learn that you generate much more revenue in selling a lot of good cocktails instead of the cheapest cocktail; because people don't go for many cocktails. They only go for one.

If I were to set up my own bar in my own home, what essential alcohol would you recommend?

Usually people are afraid to make their own cocktails at home because you need a lot of different spirits, liquors, glasses, ice... blah blah blah. It's true. The best way to begin with cocktails is to choose one cocktail you love, like a Cosmopolitan, or a Margherita.

What's your favourite cocktail to make then?

A Cosmopolitan.

How would you make it?

You need a good vodka. A Polish one. Definitely forget about French vodka. Well, we know how to make wine; we know how to make cheese; we know how to be romantic; but we definitely don't know how to make good vodka. So I don't know why we even try to make vodka. It's a shame. If you need vodka, go for Polish vodka, and maybe Russian. But I feel Polish is the best. So you need one bottle of cranberry juice, one bottle of Grand Marnier and a few fresh lemons. The easiest way to make a good Cosmopolitan is one part vodka, one part Grand Marnier, one part cranberry juice and the juice of one fresh lemon.

Where have you seen the best bartenders?

The best ones I've seen in five or six years came from Taipei. It was the way they worked, the way they knew the produce. A bartender is not only about making cocktails, but also making people happy, setting up the bar, cleaning the bar. It's a full job, and the way they do all these things in a single job is really impressive. ☺